GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2047
ANSWERED ON:03.12.2001
ECONOMIC GROWTH OF WEAKER SECTIONS
KAMBALAPADU E. KRISHNAMURTHY

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Article 46 of the Constitution directs the States to promote with special care the economic interests of the weaker sections of the people particularly of the SCs and STs so as to protect them from social injustice and exploitation and to overcome the prevailing deep rooted social prejudices and historical economic hardships suffered by them; and

(b) if so, the steps being taken to give effect to this constitutional directive to promote with special care the economic interest of the SCs and STs in tapping the forest resources through State Sponsored Scheme/ Programmes such as leasing of wood collection and award of agency licence/permit for transportation etc.?

Answer

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU)

(a) Yes Sir.

(b) The Government is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme `Association of Scheduled Tribes and Rural Poor in Regeneration of Degraded Forests on Usufruct Sharing Basis` for the benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The scheme was initiated in VIII Plan and continued in IX Plan. The Scheme is now being implemented in 16 States.
The objectives of the scheme are: 1.To improve forest based biomass resource base in degraded forest lands and to manage it on a sustained basis for domestic needs of the identified communities. 2. To involve local Scheduled Tribes and other rural poor in protection and rehabilitation of degraded forests for maintenance of ecology of the area and for sustenance of local communities. 3. To provide gainful employment and sustainable economic base to scheduled tribes and other rural poor in the vicinity of their habitation.

Under other afforestation schemes such as Integrated Afforestation and Ecodevelopment Project, Area Oriented Fuel and Fodder Project, Non Timber Forest Products Project, about 60-70%of the funds are spent towards labour component which provides employment to the rural poor including SC/STs.

The Government is promoting Joint Forest Management(JFM) to involve people living in and around forests in the management of forests. A benefit sharing mechanism has been evolved for people living in the vicinity of forests to secure their active participation in the management of forests. Under JFM programme, people have been given free access to the forest which is under the control of the concerned Forest Protection Committee.JFM aims to provide fuelwood, fodder, non-wood forest products and timber to local people living in and around forests.